DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 238 122 EA 016 215

AUTHOR Johnson, Eric W.
TITLE Evaluating the Performance of Trustees and School Heads.
INSTITUTION National Association of Independent Schools, Boston, Mass.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-934338-48-5
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 58p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publications, National Association of Independent Schools, 18 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108 ($7.00 plus $1.00 postage and handling).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Evaluation; *Board Administrator Relationship; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Methods; Evaluation Needs; Evaluative Thinking; Governance; Governing Boards; *Interprofessional Relationship; Peer Evaluation; *Private Schools; Trustees

ABSTRACT

Reciprocal evaluations of and by trustees and the head of an independent school should meausure performance against clearly established expectations, framed in accordance with the mission and philosophy of the school itself. Such evaluations should be regular, candid, objective, and constructive, reenforcing effective performance as well as identifying potential problems. Differences of opinion should be resolved by discussion and exchange of views rather than by vote, and in all evaluation, distinctions should be carefully drawn between policy-making (the trustees' responsibility) and school operations (the responsibility of the head and staff). Finally, mutual respect must inform the entire evaluative process, whether formal or informal. Examples of evaluation procedures for trustees and heads of seven different schools are provided, along with a chapter on situations, problems, and opportunities that may need special emphasis in the evaluation process. Sample evaluation forms are included in an appendix. (TE)

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Evaluating the Performance of Trustees and School Heads

Eric W. Johnson

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National Association of Independent Schools

Evaluating the Performance of Trustees and School Heads

Eric W. Johnson

National Association of
Independent Schools

18 Tremont Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108

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Preface

When *Evaluating Our Performance*, the earlier version of this manual, appeared in 1978, the goal was to "help boards and heads function in closer harmony at a time when new pressures and dilemmas had greatly increased the complexity of independent school governance." The preface suggested that "evaluation of the performance of both the board and the head is essential to good communications and effective goal setting."

Since that time some important and interesting things have happened. A 1979 NAIS survey of school heads showed about 45 per cent of the respondents reporting an annual board review of their performance, with an additional 8.5 per cent saying that such review took place every two or three years. Informal evidence suggests that these percentages have risen since 1979.

Believing it should practice what it "preaches," in 1980 the NAIS board of directors began a process for evaluating itself and the president. We now know at first hand that it isn't all easy, but that the results can be extraordinarily valuable. As we learn of the occasional struggles of independent school boards and heads, we get the distinct impression that well-functioning evaluation could have precluded much of the pain and anticipated much of the difficulty early enough to deal constructively with it.

We hope this manual will be useful. Permission is hereby granted to use and modify any of the forms shown in the book. For help in planning evaluation workshops or seminars, a school may call or write to the NAIS director of administrative services.

We believe the NAIS board's commitment to high quality in independent schools is advanced by the processes described in this book, for that quality is directly related to each school's leadership—from the board and from the head.

John C. Esty, Jr.
President, NAIS

1.

Evaluation and Why It Matters

In any school, even the simplest, smallest school, evaluation is constantly going on. It may or may not be punctuated by scheduled events. In all schools, people are making judgments, small and large, about how they themselves are doing and about how others are doing. This is especially true of school heads, who are always evaluating and being evaluated. The challenge is to have this constant evaluation strengthen the school and everyone in it by encouraging people and showing them how they might perform at their best.

We emphasize evaluation of performance, because we believe that no human being has the right to evaluate another human being; we are all of infinite worth. But we do have the right, and often the responsibility, within proper limits and perspective, to evaluate what we do, how we perform.

We deal here with evaluating the performance of trustees, both as corporate bodies and as individuals, and the performance of heads of schools. We do not talk about evaluating schools, even though the two processes cannot be strictly separated.

All evaluation, to be successful, must be undertaken with a clear understanding of the "political" limits set by the history, character, and self-concept of a given school. No school community can be run purely as a problem in systems management, but neither can it be managed like a family; families are wonderful for their purpose, but they are not, thanks be, professional.

All evaluation should be subject to the stated purposes and

mission of the school and whatever traditions are deep within it. Although new brooms and clean sweeps are rarely useful, a main purpose of the board is to look closely from time to time at the school's statement of purpose to be sure that it is good and that the school is operating according to it or, if it is not, that it is modified. The head of the school, however, should accept the basic character, value system, and purposes of the school. The head may examine and question the school's character and values and work for their modification. If they prove a source of fundamental discontent, the head should look for other employment, not try to evaluate the place into something that it is not. The same goes for individual trustees considering their service on the board.

Evaluation of the performance of trustees and head should ideally be based on the principles that underlie the operation of any good school: a clearly stated philosophy; clearly stated, or at least clearly understood, long- and short-term objectives; clearly defined responsibilities, especially those delineating and distinguishing the functions of the board and head; and open, constructive communication.

All evaluation, both the inevitable daily kind and whatever more formal procedures a school may decide to use, should be done in such a way that it increases the respect of board members and head for one another. This is particularly important when a school is selecting a method of evaluation and an evaluative instrument, or written form. Methods tend to reduce respect for the head if they involve presumptuous or unnecessary questions, for trustees if they deal with trivia or assume ignorance.

Major elements of evaluation should be praise, support, and encouragement of good work and good planning. Threat should never be present. One of the troubles with many evaluations is that their praise is general, brief, and polite, while their comments and suggestions for improvement are detailed, long, and sometimes even eroding.

Evaluation should deal with issues, not reputations. Evaluators should speak whatever truth they feel reasonably sure of or raise important questions they feel need to be examined. These must be questions of substance about running the school, however, not opinions about the personality or style of those being evaluated. Evaluations must also be realistic. Measured starkly against a standard of perfection, most of us would come out discouraged and probably weaker than we are—or nastier.

The principal benefit of evaluation should be more competent and satisfying performance on the part of all. Here are some other possible benefits, all related to this one.

- Evaluation may lead to more and better communication among those working for the school—open discussion of key issues and an atmosphere in which no one feels threatened by talking about problems and possible solutions. Heads of some highly communicative schools say, though, that more communication is the last thing they need. The amount they already have sometimes makes it difficult to get their work done. Quality and substance of communication are what count, not length or volume.
- Regular evaluation, especially if recorded and documented, provides a steadying record of progress toward objectives that helps when board members or the head feel unsteady or in times of crisis.
- Evaluation helps to identify and deal with problems early, before molehills become mountains. Several heads, for example, because of lack of exchange with trustees, have found themselves precipitously fired, sometimes unjustly and usually with grave damage to the school and to themselves.
- Evaluation helps the trustees and head of an established school see more clearly when it is sinking into weakness or self-satisfaction. On the other hand, evaluation can also make them aware that the school is making heartening progress.
- Regular evaluation, if constructively done, helps keep the attention of trustees, head, and all other members of the staff concentrated on the goals and basic purposes of the school.
- Evaluation makes the head feel less lonely in what for many is a lonely job, despite being surrounded day and night by people and talk. Many heads find that planned evaluation gives them much-needed feedback, feedback that the very nature of their job makes it difficult to get in the normal course of the school year, except in times of crisis.

When we study the attempts of heads and trustees of schools of all sizes, natures, and climates to evaluate their performance, or their attempts to avoid any regular, formal evaluation, we are astonished to find that many of the liveliest and most successful schools do not use any system or forms for evaluating the performance of trustees and head and feel no need to do so. Neither do some of the most contorted, problem-plagued schools. But other schools in both categories do use carefully

developed evaluative exercises. We therefore cannot say what a school should do, except to assert that enlightened evaluation of performance of trustees and head is likely to strengthen almost any school.

While no one system applies equally well to all schools, most do use some kind of formal plus informal evaluation that they have worked out themselves or adapted from the experience of other schools. It often combines formal and informal procedures. Planned evaluation of the head's performance is much more common than planned evaluation of the performance of trustees. Many heads whose performance is not evaluated wish it were. How most trustees feel is not clear.

An experience frequently reported by heads and trustees is that it is difficult to get a regular evaluation procedure started. Once under way, however, it turns out to work far better than heads, and especially trustees, thought it would. Why? People are afraid that it will be immensely dull or time-consuming and can't stand the thought of going through the process. People fear it will be threatening. People think it may drive away valuable servants of the school. People are sure it must mean that someone thinks crisis is imminent and is looking for somebody else to blame. People fear that suggesting evaluation implies terrible problems that need exposure.

Some of these fears may be justified, but mostly they are not. Several voices of experience say that, once evaluation becomes part of the school's routine, fears about it turn out to be groundless.

Two other points about getting started: evaluation is easier when it is asked for, and in most cases it is up to the school head to get it started.

2.

Examples of Evaluation of Performance

As we said earlier, unplanned evaluation goes on all the time as an integral part of the routines and structure of the school. This continuous informal assessment as each challenge comes along is probably the most significant kind of evaluation; it certainly is the most inevitable.

Planned evaluation can take many forms, over a wide range of methods and procedures. In looking here at what six schools do, it is well to remember that methods of evaluating the performance of trustees and heads are constantly in flux. One or two of the schools here, for instance, no longer use the forms described; we include them even so because of what they illustrate and because other schools have adopted them and found them helpful. Founding dates and enrollment figures for the six schools are approximate.

School One – 800 students; day; founded 1900

Evaluation of trustees' performance. Every two years the head writes a letter to the chairman of the board expressing his views of the board's performance. The chairman discusses the letter with the executive committee; the nominating committee goes over it as well. No report is made to the full board, but the enlightenment the letter and its discussion provide serve in informal ways to improve the performance of individual board members and the board as a whole.

Evaluation of head's performance. Periodically the chairman of the board, after prior consultation with selected people, writes or reports directly to the head on his performance and discusses it with him. Frequent informal contacts between the head and individual trustees serve as a continuous evaluation of the head's performance.

School Two – 500 students; boarding/day; founded 1890

Evaluation of trustees' performance. Every five years an ad hoc committee of the board, not including the chairman, uses a special form for getting board members' assessment. Members of this committee meet separately with each subcommittee of the board to talk about how well trustees know their facts about the school, the make-up of the board, how the chairman prepares for and conducts meetings, what problems need attention, short- and long-range planning, fund raising and management, and the academic program.

In addition, the nominating committee is charged with evaluating and reviewing the performance of the board and its individual members and with taking action and making decisions as needed.

Evaluation of head's performance. A six-person "committee to advise the head," a subcommittee of the executive committee of the board, distributes the following form each year to employees of the school.

Annual School Two Evaluation
Confidential

Who are you? Administrator Teacher Office staff
Household staff Buildings & grounds staff

1. Give the overall condition of School Two an academic grade: A B C D F

2. Do specific areas of the school life need improvement?

3. In your own particular area of work (a) Do you receive adequate supervision? and (b) Are you provided ample authority and latitude to do your job to your own satisfaction? Please comment.

4. Give the overall performance of the head an academic grade: A B C D F

5. What areas of the head's performance do you think are particularly weak? Particularly strong?

6. Give the overall performance of School Two's board of trustees an academic grade: A B C D F

7. What aspects of the performance of School Two's board would you like to mention?

Signature (optional) _____

As this committee collects and analyzes completed forms, its members meet in pairs with the main divisions of the staff. They ask such questions as "How are we doing?" "How is the head doing?" Reports of these meetings are discussed, put together with tabulations of the form, and the whole is informally written up and presented to the head by the chairman in a "talking paper," a list of items and main considerations to be dealt with that is less directive than a formal written report. After the session, the chairman gives a copy of the paper to the head as a record of main points covered.

The board also learns how the staff perceives it by reviewing the staff's ratings and comments in items 6 and 7.

School Three – 100 students; boarding/day; founded 1910

Evaluation of trustees' performance. What evaluation exists is informal. The school is grateful for the service of all, including the few who give money but are otherwise inactive.

Evaluation of head's performance. The head recently requested evaluation and collected sample forms from other schools. The board chairman used them to make up his own form, which he mailed to the trustees. A subcommittee collected the returns and wrote a report, which the chairman presented orally to the head, not giving a copy to her so that the authors of comments would not be identified, since most of the trustees are school parents. The head took notes, was surprised by some of the comments, but generally felt encouraged, relieved, and supported. She was grateful to learn how she could improve her performance.

School Four – 120 students; day; founded 1975

Evaluation of trustees' performance. The school uses no formal instrument for evaluation and finds this a shortcoming.

Some means is needed to clarify the goals and objectives of trustees, many of whom disagree in major ways about what the school should be. Trustees, feeling that the head should take the initiative in resoloving these questions, think an evaluation form would help. They are familiar with and appreciate the evaluation by the regional association of independent schools, which helps them as they seek sound directions and procedures.

Evaluation of head's performance. Because the head is new, the board reviews his performance informally twice a year, using no form. His performance is also reviewed informally in weekly 60- to 90-minute sessions with the chairman of the board, which both like.

The head and the trustees would like to see some sort of form used to make evaluations more practical, constructive, and comprehensive.

School Five—300 students; day; founded 1965

Evaluation of trustees' performance. The head took the initiative in starting an annual evaluation by means of a questionnaire for trustees. Some 17 questions ask individual members of the board to consider aspects of the school with which they should be familiar.

Evaluation of head's performance. The board completes a 43-item questionnaire dealing with the head's performance. The questionnaire varies from year to year as issues assume varying degrees of importance. (The two forms appear as Forms 4 and 5 in the Appendix.)

The chairman collates responses to these forms and discusses them in executive session with the board. Immediately afterward, she gives the head an oral report, followed by a letter.

In addition, the chairman of the education committee of the board and one other trustee visit the school, talk with faculty members, and add their findings to the issues that develop out of the answers to the questionnaire. All of this is then shared with the head as well.

School Six—800 students; day; founded 1700

Evaluation of trustees' performance. Most of the members of this long-established board are convinced that there is no value in evaluation, so none takes place except as trustees'

strengths and weaknesses are revealed in discussions of the school's long-range plans.

Evaluation of head's performance. The trustees evaluated the head's performance only after she had been at the school for five years. Both board and head found the exercise a good one. The head encourages individual trustees to tell her how she is doing; discussions of the school's long-range plan also help her to evaluate her performance. Further, the head makes the annual signing of her contract an occasion to ask the chairman for evaluative comments. Toward the end of the school year and after their contracts are signed, the head asks faculty members to fill out and return to her anonymous statements about how helpful she has or has not been to them in achieving their goals. She reads and uses these in whatever ways she finds most helpful. (While School Six does not follow general practice, its methods give evidence that there are many different ways to run a school and to deal with issues of evaluation.)

So much for examples. Twice as many would only strengthen the impression of infinite variety in the methods schools use to evaluate the performance of their trustees and heads.

3.

Some Dos and Don'ts for Evaluation

The suggestions that follow are incomplete simply because it is impossible to represent the full range of practice and experience and because none can apply to all schools and all situations. Because these suggestions have worked well for those who have supplied them, however, we present them here with a certain degree of confidence.

- Evaluate people's performance against a reasonably specific statement of expectations, but don't make these so high and all-inclusive that those whose performance is being evaluated will feel inadequate and discouraged by comparison. Rather, they should feel edified, strengthened, and clear about what reasonable steps they might take to improve their performance.
- Stick to evaluating the functions a person is supposed to perform for the school. Don't get involved in personality analysis; it is always demoralizing and never helpful to get a C-minus in sense of humor or a C-plus in personal warmth.
- Tie evaluation in with the long-range objectives and planning of the school.
- Remember that people working at challenging tasks, whether paid or volunteer, thrive on legitimate encouragement, recognition, and appreciation. But encouragement needs to be real. Exaggerated praise only perpetuates poor performance and, if not legitimately merited, can be vastly discouraging: "They're praising me for something I know isn't good; they must be hard up for something good to say."

- Evaluate performance according to whether it furthers the philosophy and purposes of the school. Don't evaluate on the basis of a private agenda or partial evidence, such as reports from your children or comments heard at a party or lunch.
- Avoid long, wordy exercises that are tolerable mainly to those who have nothing much of importance to do
- Don't allow the evaluation process to masquerade as an accomplishment in itself. As one head says, "Our carefully designed forms are much too fileable." Remember that evaluation is valuable only as it leads to improvement of performance, encouragement of already good performance, or eventual separation from deeply and incurably poor performers.
- Find ways of including the perceptions and opinions of staff members, especially teachers and principal administrators, in the evaluation process; see the example of School Two, above. But don't allow this information to move any trustee into active interference in the operations of the school, and don't allow it to undermine the authority of the head and those with whom the head works.
- Require all evaluative forms and statements to be signed. Anonymous expression of opinions should not be permitted. At the same time, make sure that the confidentiality of signed statements is respected and that they are seen only by those to whom they are addressed. If a statement is reported to a larger group—or by the chairman to the head—it should be made anonymous unless the writer approves in advance of its being otherwise.
- Don't waste time on generalities—"The school needs more endowment"; "We should communicate better." Try to translate them into precise suggestions for improvement. This does not rule out stating a general problem that an evaluator believes people may not be aware of, such as "I don't think the head is aware how much of a gap has developed between the older graduates and the school today"; "The finance committee may not fully understand that its present practices are eroding the purchasing power of our endowment."
- Go through the evaluation process every year, or at least every other year. Otherwise, it becomes a burden to start up as if from scratch. Once evaluation becomes a part of the school's routine, it need not be time-consuming. The process should be reviewed each time to keep it in tune with current issues.
- Keep aware that "negative informal assessment"—small-

scale griping—can undermine essential progress toward carefully planned goals. At the same time, be alert for the gripe that may signal an important matter that needs to be looked into.

- Don't allow evaluation of the performance of head or trustees to center on a crisis; the excitement can throw it out of perspective. Crises need to be dealt with, and the head has to spend time dealing with them, but a crisis ordinarily should not affect a regular exercise in evaluation of the performance of the head or the trustees.
- Don't evaluate the school or the performance of its employees and trustees as you would a business. Although schools and businesses do share certain characteristics, a school is far less easily defined than a business, and its objectives are usually more complex. Teachers should be viewed as professionals, not as employees turning out products or performing particular services. Inexperienced trustees sometimes seem to think that school people emphasize the difference between schools and businesses just to avoid having to adopt effective management practices. The success of good businesses is measured by profit and loss. While schools should operate efficiently and not at a loss, even as nonprofit institutions, that does not define a good school. The principal assets of a school are its faculty and its students. How well a school promotes human strengths and values is the real measure of its success.
- Recognize in evaluating the performance of trustees that the perspective of "business"—which suggests an ability to make objective judgments, to adduce informal but amateur commonsense judgments, to add and subtract correctly, to manage money and property, and even to develop the ability of people to achieve—is of great value to any school.
- Don't allow to persist among the school's staff the almost always unrealistic view that the trustees are simply remote, wealthy people who could furnish funds for all the big projects if they just wanted to.
- Trustees should make every effort to be of service to their school. While they need to be sensitive to its problems and aware of them, their main job is not to ferret out things that need changing. To avoid falling prey to committees or groups lobbying for this or that, trustees should listen carefully but not allow their objectivity to be affected. As one wise trustee said, "Trustees must keep the welfare of the whole school in mind, keep their heads screwed on straight, and not be lured down any primrose paths."

- Remember that, in an institution as complex and human as as school, problems are hardly ever solved. New trustees may need some time to understand that rarely does someone just come in and fix a problem – for good. They should try to develop tolerance for long-run problems that get dealt with but keep cropping up to be dealt with again. In fact, dealing with problems is a principal function of education. In the words of a very experienced vice principal who never wanted to be head, "Everything has to be dealt with all over again every five years."
- Remember that usually it helps if the essence of evaluations is written down, discussed by the board, and put into the board minutes for future reference.

4.

Evaluating the Performance of Trustees

We have emphasized the importance of evaluating performance against a clear, detailed statement of expectations. The NAIS *Trustee Handbook* expresses the essential qualifications—expectations—for trusteeship in the form of questions, as follows.

- Are my views on life and education generally congenial with the stated fundamental goals and purposes of the school, and can I keep the ultimate purposes of the school in mind whenever decisions are to be made? Can I keep a sense of perspective?
- Do I have talents and abilities that the school needs on its governing board?
- Am I able to make judgments on matters of policy with the detachment of an outsider, one who has no career stake in the institution? If I have children in the school, can I make judgments based on the good of *all* the children in the school?
- Can I arrange my life so that I can attend board meetings regularly and work on at least one committee of the board?
- Am I interested enough in the work and purposes of the school to give generously of my talents and resources, whatever they may be?
- Am I willing and able to become well acquainted with the school and its operations, and possibly privy to confidential

matters, yet able to keep from intervening in the daily affairs of the school?

- Am I discreet and able to keep confidences?

Honest answers to these seven direct questions by each trustee will in itself have beneficial effects on performance.

One school developed a longer, more demanding self-evaluation for trustees. It took the form of a "trustee report card," administered to trustees at a workshop that was part of their first meeting of the year. Using multiple-choice statements, the test sought information about school life, the business of being a trustee, and financial support. After "correcting" their own tests, trustees broke into small groups to consider the results and move toward a statement of priorities for the board. The tests were never collected or used for anything except getting the trustees to think about their performance as individuals and as a group. (The "trustee report card" appears as Form 3 in the Appendix.)

Yet another method of evaluation is a "directed essay," which, because it need not be long or complicated, is likely to get at the most important issues. Here is a sample of what is involved.

Evaluation of the Performance of the Board of Trustees of The _____ School

Please write anything you think would be helpful about the strengths and weaknesses of the board and note any areas in which you think its service to the school might be improved.

Some areas you may wish to touch on are the composition of the board, its committees, how questions are brought to it, how its meetings are conducted, how well the chairman is performing her functions, the board's service to the school, your own participation in board meetings and committees, your own sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with serving on the board, and any other subjects about which you are concerned.

Replies will be read and considered by [name of trustee in charge of the evaluation], who will summarize them in whatever way seems best for making a report. This report will be mailed to you before the meeting on [date], when we will discuss and deal with its suggestions in whatever way we decide. In the report, [name of trustee in charge] may quote directly from some replies, but no names will be used. However, please sign your statement so that she may discuss it with you if she wishes.

Explicit, systematic evaluation of the performance of trustees

as a corporate body or as individuals is the exception rather than the rule among schools. To many, it seems somehow presumptous, disrespectful, and ungrateful to subject to evaluation people who volunteer their services. They are not employees, they make no money out of the job, and it costs them quite a lot of time and, if they have any, money.

Yet most schools will profit greatly from evaluating the performance of their trustees both individually and corporately. No single method of evaluation can be prescribed as best; schools and the personalities involved differ too much for that. Even so, some basic elements of evaluation can be recommended to all, to be adjusted to fit each school's circumstances.

Self-evaluation. Once a year, the chairman or head of the nominating committee may send each trustee a set of questions, possibly like those at the beginning of this chapter. A note should be enclosed, expressing appreciation for the board's service. It should state that self-evaluation is just that; no report can or will be made, but questions and their implications for the board will be discussed at the next meeting. The note should state clearly that self-evaluation arises not out of any crisis or sense of inadequacy of the board but only out of a desire to help the entire board be of the best possible service to the school. Later, the discussion at the board meeting should probably be informal to give members a chance to express their concerns. If they reach agreement on strengths and weaknesses of the board, these should be noted in the minutes, but no pressure toward agreement should be applied.

Evaluation by the chairman and the head. In their scheduled or unscheduled conversations, the chairman of the board and the head of the school should, from time to time, consider the performance of trustees individually and as a group. Following this consideration, appreciation for especially valuable service can be expressed; the chairman, the head, or both can discuss with trustees special areas in which they might be of special service; and, where a trustee's service is felt to be inadequate, steps toward improvement may be discussed or, if necessary, the trustee can be asked to step down before or at the end of his or her term.

The performance of the board—including that of the chairman—should always be on the informal agenda of the chairman and the head. The initiative comes better from the chairman, but if it doesn't the head should take it. In their informal sessions, the chairman and the head can a[illegible]be im-

mensely useful to each other by continually evaluating each other's performance in small and large ways. They can be independent of yet frank and open with each other, reacting as requested or needed to each other's performance and serving as a mutual improvement team of two.

Evaluation by the nominating committee or the committee on trustees. One of the primary jobs of the nominating committee is to evaluate the performance of individual trustees when they are up for re-election. If the head and chairman of the board are not ex officio members of the nominating committee, their opinions should be sought. The committee should not hesitate to suggest to those who have not performed well that they resign to make way for more active, useful members. Further, it should encourage those whose performance is of great value to serve their entire term.

Evaluation of the performance of the chairman. Any good evaluation of the work of the board includes the performance of the chairman, which is usually a critical factor in determining how well the trustees, both individually and as a board, are able to perform.

Evaluation and long-range planning. When a school is formulating a long-range plan, or considering one, it needs to look at the performance and abilities of trustees as they relate to the plan. Have the trustees, separately and as a group, and those whose aid they can muster, got what it takes? This and similar questions are good items for the agenda every so often. Such items for discussion should be carefully prepared by the head and chairman or by the executive committee.

Major evaluation seminars or workshops. Some boards occasionally set aside a day, an afternoon or an evening, or dinner and an evening to consider their performance as it relates to the purposes, needs, and performance of the school. Such occasions should focus clearly on the business on the school, not just on "getting to know one another better," worthwhile as a good meal and time for informal exchange can be. Holding the session at the school, if possible, helps trustees keep in touch with its realities and provides yet another visit to the school. Including the head of the school and principal administrators in whole- and small-group sessions is a good idea. The chairman and head may want to design a special evaluation form for the occasion, perhaps drawing on some of the ones reproduced here.

Evaluation in advance of appointment or election. Probably

the most important evaluation of a trustee's performance is done before he or she is appointed – or it should be. The nominating committee should carefully consider the experience and strengths of the candidate for membership. What are the talents the candidate will bring to the board that it needs – managerial, business, legal, educational, financial, public relations, willingness to work hard, general wisdom and good judgment? Does the candidate understand the school and its mission and approve of them? Can he or she attend meetings of the board? What limitations are there on the service that the candidate can give? Some potential board members may be willing to give, usually quickly over the telephone, expert advice in their field but not be able to spend much time at meetings. Does the board need and want this kind of service? Others, devoted and highly intelligent, have no easily labeled special talent but are willing to labor faithfully on the routine and special tasks that need to be done. Does the board need this kind of service? Time spent in advance in frank discussion between the candidate and the board's representative about mutual needs, expectations, and capacities is time well spent.

The heads or chairmen of some schools, especially those that are small, shaky, or just getting started, report that they are grateful for almost anyone who is willing to be a trustee. They therefore hesitate to suggest evaluation of performance because it may drive away such talent as there is.

In schools operated and inspired mainly by a vigorous head whose talents, deeds, vision, and energy are the main force in keeping the school together, developing a strong board of trustees may be a special challenge. It may seem obvious that such heads, if they are wise, will consider it a high priority to develop a competent board. The first step is to attract people, the next is to devolve upon them the functions of trusteeship – policy making and garnering support – and the third is to develop procedures, no matter how informal, for evaluating their performance. If these steps are not taken, a school remains too dependent on the talents of one person – the head.

In considering the service of men and women on a school's board, the head, chairman, and nominating committee should not forget the tremendous potential for growth and development of talent in people who have never before been trustees. One of their jobs is to identify such people, bring them onto the board, and give them a chance to develop their strengths. Typical candidates might be business people who have reached

a point in their careers where they have time to serve; housewives – perhaps once professionals, perhaps not – whose children are now old enough for them to use their talents for important service; and professionals – physicians, architects, professors – whose circumstances now make it possible for them to give time for trusteeship. Some of the best leadership among school trustees comes from people of high intelligence, devotion, energy, and general competence that develops in service to a school. Constructive evaluation of the performance of such people can play an important part in developing their talents as trustees.

What do trustees learn about their performance and the performance of their board as a result of evaluation? Here are some of the things they have mentioned in conversation.

- Too often the head and the chairman need our considered judgment on a recommendation made by a subcommittee or by the head, and all we do is say, "Hey, good! We approve."
- Twice last month I protested to a school staff member about school operations on the basis of reports that turned out to be unreliable. I meant well, but I was meddling and causing resentment and confusion. I should have cleared those reports with the chairman or the head.
- Being one of the five members of the board who do not participate in annual giving weakens the school. Gifts of my time and experience aren't enough.
- Generally our board meetings devote too much of the first hour and a half to routine reports and protocol. This means that the things we need most to discuss come at the end, when we are too weary to do them justice.
- On impulse, I raise policy questions and press for decisions too quickly, when such questions should be discussed briefly and referred to a committee to develop careful recommendations.
- I allowed the problem my fourth grader is having with reading to affect my judgment about the school's program and budget.
- As chairman, I have to give more attention to making sure that board committees prepare carefully for board meetings.
- By soliciting a major prospect for a capital gift without clearing it first with the development office, I may have settled for a medium-sized gift when we might have been able to get a major one.
- Our board is too much dominated by the older group of

founding trustees and is unwilling to consider new opinions, new ways, new strengths, and new sources of objectivity.

- I could have saved the school a lot of time and money if I'd volunteered my expertise on medical benefits and retirement plans.
- I insisted that we hurry our discussion of long-range building plans and pressed too soon for a decision.
- At a party where people were talking about the school, I allowed some misstatements and complaints to pass when I could have explained what I knew and possibly helped people understand and support the school.
- I felt, as a result of this evaluation, renewed dedication to helping the school achieve its purposes.
- I gained new confidence that the problems facing the school can be dealt with.
- I realized how hard it is for the head to achieve all of her goals when the board, in some cases, clearly does not achieve its goals.

5.

Evaluating the Performance of School Heads

Whether heads like it or not, their performance is being evaluated all of the time by somebody and most of the time by a lot of people in ways planned and unplanned, wise and foolish. To be evaluated and to respond prudently to evaluation is part of the head's job. We deal here with the planned aspects.

Many school heads take the initiative by showing that they are open to having their performance evaluated and welcome it—in moderation. In their dozens of conversations each week, they often ask, "Have you any suggestions for me, or for the school?" At meetings of the faculty, groups, committees, the board, and parents they are alert to suggestions. Alertness is a condition, but also a part, of their plan, and it is a healthy habit.

A major part of the plan of most heads is to try to maintain frank yet confidential communication with the chairman of the board. This should be part of the chairman's plan, too. Heads are vastly helped in doing their job by chairmen who support and encourage them yet maintain an independent relationship to them. Neither is in the other's pocket, but neither ever surprises the other in a meeting. They know each other's thinking in advance no matter how much their thinking may differ.

Evaluation of the head's performance, like any sound evalua-

tion, should be based on clearly understood expectations. The most basic of these are that the head shall carry out the policies of the governing board, give the board the information and advice it needs to establish sound policies, and serve as the professional educational leader of the school. For the purposes of evaluation, these expectations can be broken down into more discrete segments.

Each school, usually on the initiative of the head and the board chairman, can work out its own list of expectations. Constructive evaluations are usually based on something more definite than "How is the head doing?" or "What are the head's strengths and weaknesses?" and less specific and demanding than the long lists of ideal performance criteria that some schools use, which are impossible for any normal human being to live up to.

One further point: the evaluation of the head's performance is usually also an evaluation of the performance of the entire administrative team, large or small.

The following suggested procedure for planned evaluation of the head's performance, while not universally applicable, is based on successful and unsuccessful evaluations reported by heads and trustees.

- If planned evaluation of the head's performance is not an established annual event, the head signifies a desire for such evaluation, or the chairman of the board ascertains that willingness.
- The head and the chairman agree on what kind of form or instrument to use. Our preference is for the "directed essay," written by trustees about the head's performance, which is likely to be the most efficient way of getting at essentials. Essays should be signed and sent to the chairman for summarizing and anonymous quoting when doing so may serve a purpose.

An alternative to the essay is a form, with replies also collated by the chairman. The following form has been used in recent years by School Seven, a day school enrolling 650 students founded in 1750.

School Seven
Evaluation of Head's Performance

Each year the board of trustees of School Seven evaluates the head's performance. Part of the process is for each member of

the board of trustees to complete this form. The officers of the board—chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer—review these evaluations and meet with the head.

Please answer as many of the questions below as you can and return your reply to me by [date].

[Signed: Chairman of the Board]

1. Make a general evaluation of the head's performance as the leader of School Seven.
2. Evaluate the head's relations and communications with
   a. Board of trustees
   b. Staff
   c. Students
   d. Alumni
   e. General community
   f. Other
3. What are the head's strengths with the staff?
4. Evaluate the head's strengths with the board of trustees.
5. Evaluate the head's performance in hiring faculty and staff.
6. How can the head improve with the board of trustees?
7. How can the head improve with the faculty and staff?
8. Evaluate the head's administration of the school's policies as established by the board of trustees.
9. Evaluate the head's performance with respect to the school's educational standards.
10. Evaluate the head's financial administration of the school in the area of
    a. Budget
    b. Fund raising
11. Write any other comments in evaluation of the head's performance.

[Signature of trustee completing form]

• At the same time, the head writes a statement evaluating his or her own performance. One way might be for the head to answer the same questions asked in School Seven's form, above, and compare his or her answers with those generated

by the board. This would allow the head to assess himself or herself and raise questions with the board, which would receive confidential copies. The evaluation might well include such items as objectives for the past year and the extent to which the head has succeeded in helping the school reach or progress toward them; objectives for the coming year and the year or two following, with the head's estimate of his or her capacity to achieve them; the head's description of his or her style of management and comments about where it works well and where it needs improvement; areas in which the head would especially appreciate the evaluation of the board; and areas in which the head feels the need of more help from the board to operate as effectively as possible under board policies.

- At a scheduled meeting, the head and board freely discuss the head's self-evaluation and any concerns trustees may have. Some heads and boards prefer to have a small group of trustees hold this discussion with the head. Then the board goes into executive session, with head and staff members absent. They hear or read the summary of evaluation essays or forms, consider the discussion just held with the head, and informally agree on the main points they wish to make in the evaluation, which may or may not be recorded in the minutes.
- Within a day or two of this meeting, the chairman and head—or possibly the chairman, two or three other trustees, and the head—meet to convey the board's evaluative comments to the head and to discuss them freely and informally. This may be done by means of a "talking paper," a list of main points to be covered in discussion. At the end of the meeting, the head receives a copy of the paper to be sure that main points have been covered and understood.

Other considerations in evaluating the head's performance need to be underlined.

Enlisting the opinions of faculty and staff members. Schools, heads, and boards differ greatly on whether to ask staff members to evaluate the head's performance. Many boards, knowing that the head is the leader of the school, and especially of the faculty and staff, and realizing the importance of clear distinctions between policy and operations, stay away from asking even principal administrators for comment. They fear divisiveness, meddling, and the possibility of a problem-hunting approach that could lead to a problem-making result. Some boards do, however, appoint a special subcommittee of two or three peo-

ple to solicit faculty and staff opinion, in writing or in informal meetings of parts of the school. An example of this procedure is that of School Two, above, whose board and head say the process works well.

A more customary way to get comment from the faculty and staff is for the head to obtain it directly in writing. Sometimes a form to be returned anonymously is used, though many feel strongly that anonymous opinions should not be permitted. The head analyzes the content of staff opinion and makes its essence part of his or her statement to the board. In some cases, actual staff comments may be shared and discussed with the chairman of the board. Other heads, however, feel that their daily contact with staff members gives them ample and honest continuous evaluation and that using forms serves no further purpose.

When to evaluate. It is best to follow the head's wishes in timing his or her evaluation. Some heads prefer to prepare their evaluations and receive the board's evaluation during the more relaxed summer months. Others do not want their summer encumbered by such heavy thoughts. Many feel that an evaluation is likely to have more effect and be more realistic if it is prepared for and discussed in the thick of the school year.

One point is clear: evaluation should not occur when the head's salary and benefits are being discussed or a contract is being signed. If the head is evaluated at the time that his or her salary is being considered, then there is an obvious temptation to explain and justify previous decisions to the point that such justification obscures the best interests of the institution. If, on the other hand, the salary has been fixed and the head already has a commitment from the school to work through the next year, then there is nothing to lose and perhaps a lot to gain by being candid about shortcomings that he or she would like to correct.

Generally, evaluation should be annual and routine. During the first year or two, however, when a new head and the school are becoming accustomed to each other, evaluations might occur more often than once a year, probably as informal conferences following a canvass of board opinion. The same holds if people have serious doubts about whether the head should be reappointed.

After a head has been on the job successfully for several years, an evaluation every two or three years is probably enough. The interval should be definitely determined by the board so that

evaluation after a lapse of a year or two is not taken as lack of confidence or a crisis.

And, as we said earlier, some heads, teamed with wise trustees, are expert enough at keeping communications open, frank, and constant that no formal occasions for evaluation are needed.

When terminating the head's appointment is seriously considered. If, after evaluation, evidence seems strong that a new head is not going to work out or that an experienced head's performance has declined or failed to change as the needs of the school have changed, it is time to make a careful, if difficult, decision about retaining that person. Acting hastily or on the basis of inadequate or biased information must be avoided. A pamphlet entitled *Guidelines . . . for Headmasters and Boards of Trustees* (Philadelphia: Friends Council on Education, 1974) gives sound advice.

> If perchance the head turns out to be inept or inefficient, or unable easily to communicate with board or faculty, or unable to relate happily to parents or students, or unable to make firm decisions promptly, or the head isn't performing in accordance with clearly understood expectations, then steps should be taken to look into the situation. "Looking into" carries with it no other connotation than just that: getting the facts, listening quietly, and without fanfare, to all sides of the situation, and promptly taking up the matter with the head. Give him or her a full chance to talk.

After thorough discussion between the head and the chairman, and then probably between the head and the executive committee of the board, it should be made clear to the head what the board expects in the future. It may become evident during the discussions that things are not as they had appeared to be or that a small faction of board members, teachers, or parents has blown a few incidents out of proportion or wrongly evaluated them by biased or narrow personal views. In such cases, it may be changes on the board that are needed, not a new head. However this may be, the head should be clearly told what the board expects and the school needs. Forthrightness and clarity are essential. Whatever understandings are reached should be put in writing so that there will be no confusion at a later date. Then a time should be set for reviewing the situation, perhaps in three months, when the head's performance will be evaluated again.

If after this time the head is still considered unsatisfactory, the decision should be made well in advance of the date of

separation and the head should be allowed to resign with dignity and with enough time to find a new job.

What heads say they learn from evaluation. When asked how evaluations have helped them improve their performance, a number of heads have simply said, "They haven't." One said, "I didn't learn anything except that some people like busywork." Most heads like evaluation, however. When asked what important things they have learned, some of them replied as follows.

- I was surprised to learn that the board feels scared of me and somewhat afraid to disagree with me.
- I should be more assertive about what's needed to do a better job here.
- The board feels I don't bring any real problems to them for discussion and decision. They feel like rubber stamps.
- I tend to neglect the whole area of long-range planning and need to call on the board for help and to give them leadership.
- Some people feel I'm not available to them and that I should be.
- I should remind the board from time to time that they are in charge of the policies of the school; they hold the school "in trust"; I try to carry out their trust.
- I must be the educational leader of the school and not get too immersed in finances.
- My reports to the board are too detailed and don't highlight questions requiring policy decisions.
- When there is a serious, even though possibly minor, crisis impending—such as the two students in the accident after the party partly sponsored by the school—I should let board members know at the next meeting, or even before, so that they can know how to answer questions.
- I may need to delegate more of my responsibilities to other staff members so as not to overtax myself. I should feel able to leave school for a day or two and have confidence that it will continue to operate well.
- The school gives an impression of loose discipline. I need to look into this, because it may be affecting the number of applications we receive.
- I should prepare my major public speeches better. I tend to be too extemporaneous and not take advantage of special opportunities.
- Having taken seriously the agenda for changes the board agreed on, I may be trying to move too fast; there's no hurry.
- The administrators and I, especially in the lower school,

are not dealing decisively enough with one or two teachers whose performance seems only fair, whereas it used to be excellent.

- I sometimes ask board members for help and they offer it, but then I don't follow up and use it.
- Even though it is not my nature, a good many parents and some teachers complain that I come across as autocratic. I need to watch this.
- I may not be sharing school problems enough with certain senior members of the faculty.
- There has been much more unhappiness than I thought because of my temporarily abolishing student government. I need to interpret my action better.
- I know so well what needs to be done that I seem to some board members to be manipulating board meetings instead of genuinely bringing questions to them for decision.

6.

Special Situations, Problems, and Opportunities

A number of situations or problems involving the evaluation of the performance of boards and heads need special emphasis.

The strong, reluctant head. In many schools, things are clearly going well; the head is strong, established, and challenged and properly challenging, and board and head are working well together. Some heads in situations like this consider the time and energy taken up by a planned evaluation as time wasted and make it clear that they would find it not only frustrating but boring. They want to get on with operating the best school possible. If it is clear that this attitude is not masking problems that are not being dealt with, it is best not to press for evaluation but to be thankful for strength and quality and for informed continuous evaluation.

The strong, reluctant board. The same things can be said about boards. The head of an excellent school with a strong, able board writes, "I cannot imagine inflicting these questionnaires on the members of my board. They each have a clear sense of their obligations and also, I believe, recognize their weaker points. Most of them are strong personalities, and, provided their reactions are not damaging, I prefer them to be themselves, warts and all. Furthermore, because of their quality as people, they are on several boards and have a good sense of perspective. It would be most injudicious to try to put them

through an exercise which they could, quite correctly in my opinion, regard as irrelevant if not condescending. A good chairman can cope with board members who are not living up to the anticipated standards of performance and commitment." A judgment like this should be respected, and it is probably correct for some schools.

The ossified board. Some strong boards can become ossified. In such cases, it is sometimes the best, most active trustees who see the need for board evaluation and its value not only for themselves but for newer trustees, who may be feeling left out of the board's decision-making process by more established members.

When the head is the most stable, senior person in the school. In some schools, especially younger ones that were started mainly out of the present head's vision, energy, and competence, or established schools where the head has served ably for ten years or more, he or she becomes the one to whom all look for policy, guidance, inspiration, and continuity. The board may have been recruited mainly by the head or its members have joined it out of admiration for him or her.

In such schools a potential weakness can develop if the board does not have a sense of trusteeship and the independence to maintain an impartial policy-making and evaluating function. This may lead to eventual weakening of the school if the head loses vigor or originality or develops what someone has called "hardening of the categories"—a disease not peculiar to heads. The head needs to plan carefully to see that responsibility for operating the school is shared with others by prudent delegation accompanied by guidance and support. The head needs also to pass on to the board the responsibility for policy making and for holding the school and its mission in trust. Otherwise, when the day comes for the head to leave, the school may suffer a crisis.

It is especially important for the chairman of the board of this kind of school to maintain a supporting but independent and evaluative attitude toward the head and toward the policies and operation of the school and for this attitude to develop among board members as well.

None of this is said to oppose long terms of service for able school heads. Quite the contrary, as long as the institution and its board do not become overdependent on the head.

When a school's founders move on. Another problem, especially of schools in early middle age, is that they were

founded by a concerned group of vigorous, like-minded people who formed the board, selected the head, and got the school going. But then this group, with all their children having graduated, too quickly says to the next generation, "All right, the school is now yours to carry on." The effect is to cut the school from its roots and also from sources of financial support as the less affluent young take over.

While still in place, the founders must look ahead, constantly evaluate the board's performance and its make-up, and cultivate new trustees and new leadership. This requires the steady attention of the nominating committee, the chairman, and the head. It requires also that the new generation not allow the old generation to drop away and that it maintain a certain proportion of older members, whose resources of all kinds the school needs. The chairman of the board and the head need to be sure, as they consider the makeup of the board, that balanced development takes place.

The board chairman who becomes a problem. Board chairmen, even the most competent and conscientious ones, can be problems. They can dominate and dictate; they can hold, or seem to hold, the head in the palm of their hand; they can fail to give leadership and play instead a benign and passive role; they can be seized by a narrow theory, a pet idea, a conviction unfounded on a good balance of facts; or they can become antagonistic to the head. Such situations cannot last long without seriously weakening a school, even though teaching and operations seem to be flowing smoothly.

One advantage of planned evaluation of trustees is that such problems are identified and the need for action becomes clear. The action itself cannot be prescribed, but we can suggest two possibilities. One is for the head and the chairman, on the initiative of either, to talk at leisure and at length to get facts, convictions, and feelings out in the open for discussion. Forthrightness combined with respect is called for.

The other is for some trustee who is aware of the situation and on good terms with the chairman and head to take the initiative in talking with both of them, either separately or together, to bring out as objectively as possible the facts of the situation and then leave it to the chairman and head to find a constructive resolution or method of dealing with it.

A method not to use is for someone to call together "a small group of us who are concerned" to talk about the problem in the absence of the chairman and the head. This kind of rump

session, which too often resembles a mysterious semiofficial gathering, can exaggerate the problem and undermine confidence in and respect for the chairman and the head.

The board chairman's term of service. Another way that a chairman can be a problem, in this case by the very condition of his or her tenure, is simply by being new and inexperienced on the job, which tends to throw too much responsibility on the head. This problem can be alleviated, for most schools, by appointing the chairman for a term of at least three years, if he or she is willing, with another three years possible but always allowing for an out. Such continuity of service can strengthen the board and be a vast source of strength to the head, who then does not have to spend a great deal of time orienting and training the chairman to the realities of school life. What is not desired is long service by a weak or mediocre chairman. Evaluation of the chairman's service becomes essential in such a situation. Some very able people are willing to take on the job of chairman for only three years. A relatively short term of service by a capable person who can help strengthen the board and the school in major ways is acceptable.

Yet another consideration is the benefit that comes to a board from changing leadership from time to time. In anticipation of such a change, attention must be given to developing talent among board members so that the board will have people ready and competent to take over when the need arises.

A dominating in-group of the board. There is little doubt that boards do not operate well by total participatory democracy. Many schools, however, are weakened by an opposite condition that is very easy to fall into: the executive committee, or a committee of the officers of the board, and the head gradually take over all policy decisions. They report strong, cogent recommendations to the entire board, which rubber stamps its approval. Discussion, other than asking a few questions, is discouraged.

A major use of evaluation is to determine whether this condition has indeed developed and, if it has, what to do about it. The chairman and head need to exercise care in developing the agenda for board meetings to allow for a balance of informational reports and genuine policy questions that enlist the board's intelligence and wisdom. Careful monitoring of the progress of subcommittees of the board helps ensure that their policy recommendations come to the board as the result of a consciously planned schedule.

When a weak school is rebuilding or floundering. In certain situations, formal evaluation can be especially useful. An experienced head writes,

> For a young school or one that is rebuilding after a long decline, formal evaluations of heads and trustees can supply a way of rediscovering the basic elements of strength in an institution, of what is important and what is not. All of the paraphernalia of a formal structure in this case compel the participants to think through their educational values and management goals, a vital prerequisite to right decisions. In other words, if a school is floundering for one reason or another, the discipline and focus of formal evaluation may provide the insights necessary to get the school back on course.
>
> Formal evaluation may also be useful if board members, chairman, and/or head are inexperienced. Informal evaluation does not work as well when somebody is feeling insecure, a common malady when one is new. Somehow the formal structure in such instances provides certain handholds that permit the uninitiated to move carefully through the process and emerge with useful judgments.

The content and conduct of board meetings. Some board chairmen use a quick method for evaluating each board meeting by giving members an opportunity to comment after the meeting, either verbally or on a readily available form. Areas covered are preparation for the meeting, its content, how it was conducted, things people wanted to say at the meeting but weren't able to, suggestions about procedure and content of future meetings, and any other comments board members might wish to make. When they merit further discussion, concerns expressed by this means can be placed on the agenda of the next meeting.

Evaluations by associations of independent schools. Evaluations by visiting committees of independent school associations should be salutary exercises. Too often, however, they emphasize forms, square feet, contact hours, and ventilation, the rest being pleasant backscratching, done in the hope that, in a year or two, at another school it will become mutual. Of course, for accreditation forms and statistics are necessary. But it seems that too many schools try to put on a good show for the evaluators, instead of trying to let the committee see things as they usually are.

As far as the performances of head and trustees are concerned, evaluators should be asked to study these specifically and to

report honestly, especially any suggestions for improvement. Great benefits can come from the required presence from time to time of an outside evaluating body. Boards and heads who do not take advantage of such occasions by fully exposing their strengths and weaknesses and raising questions about how they are doing their jobs are wasting a major opportunity for improvement.

School visits by trustees. Of great use to trustees as they prepare themselves to make policy judgments are visits to the school two or three times a year. These should be times for looking, listening, and asking questions, never giving advice, swinging weight, or making decisions. Visits are for gathering information on everything from boilers to brains.

Although most teachers prefer to know in advance when visitors will be in their classrooms, we believe that trustees have the right to visit unannounced. That's the best way to see things as they are. However, it is better to see things announced in advance than not to see them at all, so trustees should cooperate with whatever the chairman and head have agreed on, even as they try to move to a policy of unannounced visits.

Some schools have official visiting days for trustees, which do get them onto the premises for instructive visits to classes and meetings with various groups. Trustees see the school doing what it believes is its best. The disadvantage, of course, is that the trustees see a show, not a normal day.

Uses and misuses of forms. All of the forms we show here have been found useful by some heads and trustees and have been objected to, in whole or in part, by others. Just as trustees and school heads must decide how they wish their performance to be evaluated, so must they also, if they use forms, make their own or build on existing ones.

The most useful forms seem to be those that are open and suggest areas to consider—the ones we call "directed essays." Such forms do not push evaluators into judging situations about which they have no helpful opinion yet do suggest areas of performance that could profitably be considered.

People devising forms need to remember not to bore people or drive them away with what strike others as crude or overelaborate assessment devices. Similarly, with reference to mechanics, it is best to use fairly broad evaluative symbols or categories, avoiding wherever possible such devices as "A, B, C, D, F" or "on a scale of 1-10."

There are advantages to using the same basic form each year,

once it has been found generally satisfactory, with any modifications needed to take into account changing circumstances or matters of special interest or concern. It avoids having to start all over again. The forms shown in this book will have served their purpose if they suggest questions that trustees and heads may not have considered and thus help strengthen evaluation efforts.

7.

Evaluation Essentials

Heads and trusteees are performing in hundreds of ways in strong schools today and weak ones, too. One school should not adopt another's method unexamined and unchanged. It should adapt methods to suit its own nature and circumstances.

In any evaluation, the chairman of the board and the head of the school are central to developing the methods and deciding when they will be used. As part of their work, they need to provide each other constantly with comment and evaluation.

Evaluations, formal and informal, should always be of the quality of performance, not the value of people. Performance should be measured against clearly established expectations and criteria, always with reference to how well the philosophy of the school is being followed and the school's mission served.

Evaluations should have a "professional" sense to them. They should be based on the interests of the entire school, not of the individual evaluator. And they should be candid, objective, and constructive. Major differences of opinion should be resolved by discussion and exchange of views, not by vote, and be informed by the school's philosophy.

In all evaluative activity, great care should be taken to distinguish between policy and policy making, which are the responsibility of the trustees, and operations, which are the responsibility of the head and staff.

Finally, in evaluating our performance, we need to be careful not to impose our views on one another in ways that annoy, distort, reduce mutual respect, or do damage. A delightful and doubtless apocryphal example of this happening is the follow-

ing report of an efficiency expert on a New York Philharmonic concert as recounted by Michael I. Sovern, president of Columbia University.

> For considerable periods the four oboe players have nothing to do. Their number should be reduced and the work spread more evenly over the whole of the concert, thus eliminating peaks of activity. . . . All 12 first violins were playing identical notes. This seems unnecessary duplication. . . . Much effort was absorbed in the playing of semiquavers. This seems an excessive refinement. It is recommended that all notes be rounded up to the nearest quaver. . . . No useful purpose is served by repeating on the horns a passage which has already been played by the strings. It is estimated that if all redundant passages were eliminated, the whole concert time of two hours could be reduced to 20 minutes and there would be no need for an intermission.

Appendix

Sample Evaluation Forms

No evaluation form will work for all schools, and it is quite likely that any form would need to be modified to be just right for any school. The five forms shown here have been found helpful by a number of trustees and heads, even though others who have seen them are not enthusiastic about them. And some of the forms, as will be apparent, do not conform to our view that forms that go into great detail can be too time-consuming and sometimes discouraging. We therefore advise selective reading of what follows and eclectic use of ingredients according to the particular needs of a school's trustees and head.

Form 1

This form, filled out by trustees, has been used by a day school of 350 students founded in 1960.

Evaluation Questionnaire

School head evaluation

1. How would you define the role of a head?

2. Overall, how well does the present head fulfill that role?

3. Does the head have sufficient assistants and staff to do the job properly?

4. Does the head allocate her time well? For instance, is there anything you think she should be doing that isn't getting done? Anything she should stop doing because it isn't important enough?

5. Does the head delegate the right amount of authority? Are the lines of authority clear?

6. Is she able to attract and hold good teachers and administrators?

7. Is the head approachable? Open to new ideas? Can you get to her?

8. Does she know what is going on in the school?

9. Does she work within the budget?

10. Does the head maintain a good balance between giving attention to the long-range goals and plans for the school and dealing with immediate crises and emergencies?

11. A head must communicate with—and represent the school to—any number of people: the chairman, trustees, key people in the school, faculty, staff, students, parents, alumnae/i, fund raisers, donors, the larger community. How well does the head do this? Should any of the above people, or others, receive more, or less, attention?

12. Everybody does some things better than others. What would you say were the head's particular strengths and weaknesses?

13. How might the trustees help the head do her job as well as possible?

14. What do you think the head should concentrate on in the coming year?

Board evaluation

1. What are the board's main functions?

2. What should the trustees be doing?

3. Is the board the right size?

4. Is the number of meetings satisfactory?

5. Is the written material that is sent out sufficient to enable you to do your job as trustee?

6. Should major issues be discussed in committee or before the whole board?

7. What committees are needed—for the present, long-range?

8. What sort of trustees do we lack?

Board chairman evaluation

1. How would you define the role of chairman?

2. Is communication between the chairman and the trustees good?

3. Do you think the chairman's involvement with the school and parents is adequate and effective?

4. Do you think the communication between the chairman and the head is adequate and effective?

Questions about the future

1. What problems will the board have to face—in the next year? In the next five years?

2. What objectives should the board set for itself this year?

3. What objectives should the board set for the school?

Form 2

This form is based on the excellent one produced in 1976 by the Association of Governing Boards and Universities, in Washington, D.C. The form shown here is a modification of the AGB form done by a state association of independent schools to make it apply more directly to schools. It is filled out by board members or anyone else concerned with evaluating the board's performance.

Board Evaluation Form
(not required as a condition of accreditation)

For the purpose of stimulating your thought about how a board of trustees should work and how its operations might be improved there are set forth below ten basic fields of trustee responsibility and activity. You are asked either to use this form as provided or to let it suggest to you alternative forms of your own devising.

Please consider each of the fields and rate the performance of the board in terms of each statement and the field as a whole. Ignore statements that do not apply. Rewrite statements to make them more appropriate to your school. The rating system to be used follows.

5 = very good performance, standard fully and completely met

4 = good, standard met in all but minor respects

3 = adequate, standard substantially met

2 = poor, standard not met in significant respects

1 = very poor, standard not met in any respect

0 = object to or disagree with standard

A. *School mission and policy* should be jointly developed by the board and the school head, implemented by the head, and the implementation monitored by the board.

1. The school's statement of philosophy, purposes, and objectives is both clear and useful as a guide to planning, decision making, and recruitment of students and faculty.

2. The board keeps this statement in mind as it reviews policies and practices.

3. The school lives up to its stated mission.

4. The board periodically reviews—and, as necessary, revises—the statement of philosophy.

Overall rating of board performance in this field:

Comments and suggestions:

B. *Institutional policy planning* should be required, appropriately participated in, and reviewed by the board

1. The board provides for satisfactory policy planning concerning

   a. enrollment

   b. staffing

   c. physical facilities and their use

   d. availability of resources

   e. educational programs

   f. other

2. The school head is provided with an adequate staff so organized as to carry out board policy effectively.

3. The board's role in policy planning is clear and well thought out.

Overall rating in this field:

Comments and suggestions:

C. *Physical plant* is one of the resources whose adequacy and effective use must be ensured by the board.

1. The board has played its role in ensuring that there is a master plan for meeting plant needs.

2. The board gives the school head appropriate guidance and assistance in developing policy and procedures in this area.

3. The plant is well kept.

4. The potentials of the facilities and property are fully realized in both school year and non-school year usage.

5. Board members avoid involvement in decisions on details that properly should be made by the administrative staff.

Overall rating in this field:

Comments and suggestions:

D. *Financial support and management* must be provided, both through the commitment of all trustees and through the application of the skills of the financial specialists among them.

1. Each trustee participates in personal giving within his or her capacity, influencing other persons and organizations to give, and otherwise helps to raise funds.

2. The board helps ensure that the school has competent and effective resource development capacity.

3. The board has among its members sufficient expertise in

a. long-range fiscal planning

b. investment practices

c. fiscal management

d. budget review

e. analysis of auditors' reports

Overall rating in this field:

Comments and suggestions:

E. *Board membership* should be such that the needed skills, experience, perspective, and sensitivities are brought to bear during its deliberations while at the same time members perceive themselves as serving the school community as a whole rather than acting as advocates for particular constituencies.

1. The size of the board is appropriate.

2. The board contains a sufficient range of talents, experience, and attitudes to accomplish its purposes.

3. The board takes adequate advantage of its members' skills and interests.

4. Trustees serve the whole school, not a particular constituency.

5. The board has developed appropriate policy with respect to

a. length of term

b. number of successive terms

c. age limit or honorary status

d. age composition

e. sex composition

f. minority composition

g. persons with educational expertise

h. faculty representation

i. student representation

j. alumnae/i representation

k. geographic representation

6. The board has a satisfactory process for the review of its membership's composition and participation and for planning for future membership and leadership needs.

7. The nominating committee is effective in

a. identifying and recruiting new board members

b. identifying potential officers

c. identifying and developing candidates for committee membership, fund raising, and other volunteer activity

Overall rating in this field:

Comments and suggestions:

F. *Board organization* plays an important part in determining how effectively trustees will perform and how the board's work will be accomplished.

1. Board processes are such that board members are kept well informed on matters that they must evaluate and/or make decisions on.

2. The number and duration of board meetings are such as to enable it to do its work well.

3. The present committee structure enables the board to fulfill its responsibilities effectively.

4. All committees are performing effectively.

5. The officers are doing their jobs well.

6. No small group dominates decision making.

7. Each member has a proper voice in decision making.

8. The board has proper legal counsel as to its responsibilities and liabilities as it considers courses of action.

Overall rating in this field:

Comments and suggestions:

G. *Board-head relations* must be open and mutually supportive, fostering a total institutional perspective and good working relations.

1. The board gives the head the authority needed to run the school successfully.

2. The board has made clear to the head its expections of him/her.

3. The board assesses the head's performance in terms of those expectations.

4. The board and head roles are well defined and understood by the trustees.

5. No trustee interferes improperly with the administration of the school.

6. The board gives the head adequate personal support and guidance.

7. The board assists the head by passing on concerns and problems that come to its attention.

8. The search process that produced the present head was in all respects well conducted.

Overall rating in this field:

Comments and suggestions:

H. *Board-faculty relations* should foster mutual respect and trust and a cooperative working environment in the school.

1. Board members have sufficient opportunity to meet and know faculty members.

2. Satisfactory mechanisms are in place to inform board members of faculty concerns.

3. The board, through the school head, seeks the advice and recommendations of faculty members in formulating basic educational policy.

4. The board is well informed regarding processes and policies for faculty selection, evaluation, compensation, retention, and grievances.

5. Policies in this area are adequate.

Overall rating in this field:

Comments and suggestions:

I. *Board-student relations* require that trustees have sufficient sense of student life to be able to understand issues with which the administration is dealing and to make some judgment as to how well the school is carrying out its mission.

1. The trustees have sufficient opportunity for contact with students and their activities.

2. The board has adequate policies for the protection of student health and welfare.

Overall rating in this field:

Comments and suggestions:

J. *Board-community relations* help determine the image of the school in the eyes of the community and significantly affect student and faculty recruitment as well as fund raising.

1. Trustees accept the responsibility of representing the school in the community.

2. Trustees exercise professional discretion in discussing the affairs of the school with members of the community.

3. Trustees take an active role as advocates of the school in the community.

Overall rating in this field:

Comments and suggestions:

Form 3

The following "trustee report card" was designed by the chairman and head of a day school of 750 students founded about 1980. It is in the form of a test, to be "corrected" by the trustees individually, with "no looking at your neighbors' grades." Appropriate factual answers about the school were supplied by the head. The test was administered to the trustees at a workshop that was part of their first meeting of the year. After taking the test, the trustees broke up into small groups to consider the results and move toward a statement of priorities for the board. The tests were never collected or used for anything except the purposes of the workshop and to get the trustees to think about their performance as individuals and as a group. Questions 1-7 superficially test factual knowledge of school life; 8-24 have to do with trustee business; and 25-30 concern money, more particularly the trustees' own money.

Trustee Report Card

Knowledge of school life

1. The school has a ratio of boys to girls of about
(a) 1:1 (b) 2:1 (c) 3:1

2. The enrollment of the middle school is about
(a) 150 (b) 180 (c) 210

3. Approximately how many full-time employees are there on the administration and faculty (excluding clerical and maintenance crew)?
(a) 60 (b) 90 (c) 120

4. Who is chairman of the science department?

5. The school currently requires ____ years of English in grades 9-12.

6. Who was the recipient of the Jones Award last June?

7. Students are required to participate in athletics in each trimester.
True False

Trustee business

8. Have I read or thought about the school's statement of philosophy since I became a trustee?
Yes No

9. During my trusteeship, how many ideas have I initiated that have led to effective changes at the school or in the management of its affairs?
(a) 0 (b) 2-3 (c) 4 or more

10. Last year there were five full board meetings. I attended
(a) 0 (b) 1 (c) 2 (d) 3 (e) 4 (f) 5

11. Prior to board meetings, I read all the committee reports and note areas and points I wish to question.
Yes No

12. What is the largest capital gift given to the school in the last 10 years?
(a) $25,000 (b) $75,000 (c) $150,000 (d) $250,000

13. Who chaired the trustee nominating committee last year?

14. What was the value of the school's endowment, exclusive of the pension fund, as of the last report?
(a) about $250,000 (b) about $750,000
(c) about $2,000,000 (d) about $5,000,000

15. What was the median faculty salary last year?
(a) about $12,000 (b) about $15,000
(c) about $18,000 (d) about $21,000

16. Is this above the median of the city's public schools last year?
Yes No

17. I have been chairman of, or an active force in the work of, ____ trustee committees during the last year.
(a) 0 (b) 1 (c) 2 (d) 3

18. Last year, I made an effort ____ times to speak with a teacher socially, talk about his or her feelings about the school, and express my gratitude as a trustee for the job he or she is doing.
(a) 1-5 (b) 6-10 (c) 11 or more

19. During the last year, I have introduced ____ friends to the school not just for fund raising but for public relations in an effort to spread a good image of the school to all communities.
(a) 1-3 (b) 4-6 (c) 7 or more

20. During the last year, I have given to the school staff the names of ____ families who should receive admission materials about the school.
(a) 0 (b) 1-2 (c) 3-5 (d) 6 or more

21. How many names of potential trustees did I submit to the nominating committee last year?
(a) 0 (b) 1-2 (c) 3 or more

22. John Nason, the former president of Carleton College, has stated that a trustee should persuade the hostile, disarm the critical, spike rumors, correct misunderstandings, refute misstatements, explain the problems of the school, and interpret its premises and principles. In how many conversations during the last year have I achieved one of the above?
(a) 0-5 (b) 6-10 (c) 11-20 (d) over 20

23. If someone asked me tonight what the school needed more than anything, I would say (other than a new administration!)
(a) more capital dollars (b) more endowment
(c) increased annual giving

24. I have given the development director the names of ____ prospective donors with information about how, when, and by whom they might be approached for support.
(a) 0 (b) 1-2 (c) 3-5 (d) 6 or more

You, money, and the school

25. During my tenure as a trustee, I have given to capital programs an amount of
(a) 0 (b) $1-$4,999 (c) $5,000-$9,999
(d) $10,000-$24,999 (e) $25,000-$49,999 (f) $50,000 or more

26. I have successfully solicited
(a) 0 (b) $1-$4,999 (c) $5,000-$9,999
(d) $10,000-$24,999 (e) $25,000-$49,999 (f) $50,000 or more

27. In last year's annual giving campaign, I was in the following group.

(a) Founder ($1,000 or more) (b) Head's Club ($500-$999)
(c) Green Circle ($200-$499) (d) Vanguard ($100-$199)
(e) Did not give

28. My gift to annual giving represented about ____% of my personal income.

(a) 0-0.5% (b) 0.5-1%
(c) more than 1%, less than 3% (d) more than 3%

29. I gave my pledge or gift during the early part of the drive (before November 1) to encourage solicitors and workers and show trustee support of annual giving.

Yes No

30. Realizing the long-term importance of estate planning to a school and of total board support, I have made provisions for the school in my will or trust.

Yes No

Form 4

The head of a day school of 300 students founded in 1965 took the initiative in starting an annual evaluation of trustees' performance, which occurred after the head's evaluation was completed. The following queries for the board are used as the basis for a board self-evaluation, with comments from the head. The process is carried on during two meetings of the board, and then the essence of the evaluation is written up and approved by the board.

Queries for Trustees

A. *Structure*

1. Does the board operate under a clear and up-to-date set of by-laws with which all trustees are familiar?

2. Are members of and nominees to the board representative of the school's clientele, and do they have talents that qualify them to serve?

3. Is the board organized to deal effectively with its responsibilities (officers; committee structure; length, frequency, and format of meetings)?

B. *Decision making*

4. How are board decisions made? Are all appropriate people involved? Is there a procedure for decision making? If so, is it followed?

C. *Responsibilities*

5. Does each board member have a clear idea of the responsibilities involved in trusteeship? Does each trustee do his or her best to contribute time, energy, and resources to the school?

6. Has the board developed a philosophy of what kind of school it wants, what direction it wants the school to go, and a set of clear policy guidelines?

7. Is the board careful to observe the scope and limits of its responsibilities and those of the school's administration?

8. Is the relationship between the board and the head such that each can communicate openly and frankly with the other when necessary?

9. Has the board collectively and individually done its best to provide sufficient financial resources for a high-quality K-12 day school?

10. Has the board done the best it can to promote the school in the community?

11. Does each board member demonstrate a personal interest in the school and attempt to stay abreast of educational developments in the school?

12. Are new board members promptly and effectively oriented to their responsibilities and opportunities?

13. Does the board provide for a regular evaluation of its own performance as well as for that of the head and the school program?

14. Does the board maintain good communication with its own constituents and the school community?

15. Does each board member exercise care and judgment in the handling of any complaints, grievances, or problems that may come to his or her attention?

16. Is the board responsible, careful, and forward-thinking in its financial management?

17. Does the board make an effort to know the employees of the school and take an interest in them as individuals?

Form 5

The same school (day, 300 students, founded 1965) also evaluated the head's performance, at the head's initiative. This form, which is modified each year, may prove an especially rich source of questions, although most schools will probably not wish to examine the performance of the head in such detail.

Evaluation of the Head

Directions. Grade the head in accordance with the grading system below only for those factors listed of which you have real knowledge in relation to this person. Please remember to give two grades for each question, as indicated: one for "Personal knowledge," another for "General impression." [The actual form has two columns opposite the questions, one headed "Personal knowledge," the other "General impression."]

5 = Consistently outstanding

4 = Generally above expected level; occasionally outstanding

3 = Generally at expected level: occasionally above

2 = Generally at expected level: occasionally below

1 = Below expected level

? = I have no opinion or knowledge on this

A. *Position performance:* how well the head carries out the duties of his present job.

1. *Technical knowledge:* knowledge of functional skills needed to carry out position requirements.

2. *Accomplishment:* effective use of time; amount of work produced.

3. *Quality:* accuracy and thoroughness; high standards.

4. *Dependability:* meets schedules and deadlines; adheres to instructions and policy.

5. *Acuteness:* mentally alert; understands instructions, unusual situations, and circumstances quickly.

6. *Flexibility:* adaptable; adjusts rapidly to changing conditions; copes with the unexpected.

7. *Socialness:* makes friends easily; works "comfortably" with others; has sincere interest in people.

8. *Acceptance:* gains confidence of others; gains respect.

9. *Attitude:* enthusiastic, constructive, optimistic, loyal; good orientation to school, position, and associates.

10. *Self-control:* calm and poised under pressure.

11. *Initiative:* self-starting; prompt to take hold of a problem; sees and acts on new opportunities.

12. *Drive:* works with energy; not easily discouraged; basic urge to get things done.

13. *Self-confidence:* assured bearing; inner security.

14. *Motivation:* has well-planned goals; willingly assumes greater responsibilities; realistically ambitious.

15. *Objectivity:* has an open mind; keeps emotional or personal interests from influencing decisions.

16. *Verbal facility:* articulate; communicative—generally understood by persons at all levels.

17. *Intellectual ability:* ability to solve problems, adapt to new situations, analyze and make judgments.

18. *Human relations skills:* ability to motivate people and get them to work together.

19. *Sensitivity:* has a "feel" for people, recognizes their problems; quick to pick up "the way the wind is blowing"; is considerate of others.

20. *Leadership:* receives loyalty and cooperation from others. Manages and motivates others to full effectiveness.

21. *Developing others:* develops competent successors and replacements.

22. *Breadth of knowledge:* range of interests· use of information and concepts from other related fields of knowledge.

23. *Planning:* looks ahead; develops programs and work schedules.

24. *Administration:* organizes own work and that of others; delegation, follow-up.

25. *Analysis and judgment:* critical observer, breaks problem into components, weighs and relates; arrives at sound conclusions.

26. *Creativeness:* original ideas; an inquiring mind; fresh approaches to problems.

27. *Capacity:* mental depth and breadth; reservoir of mental ability.

28. *Vision:* has foresight, sees new opportunities; appreciates, but is not bound by, tradition or custom.

B. *Personal characteristics:* the total of temperament or personality characteristics bearing on the head's functioning.

1. Demonstrates convincing sincerity in his dealings with people.

2. Has a sense of humor appropriate to the occasion.

3. Is resilient; can handle setbacks maturely and learn from mistakes.

4. Has rapport with

   Faculty

   Students

   Trustees

   Parents

   Others outside the school

5. Represents the school effectively in the community

6. Can be empathetic with a number of alternatives on a problem, yet be detached enough not to be "caught up" in the issue. Able to come to his own independent decision.

7. Demonstrates balance between being a "humanist" and a manager.

C. *In general*

1. Carries out the educational policy set by the board.

2. The head has selected strong and effective principals and department heads who can guide their instructors, evaluate them, and improve their capabilities.

3. Initiates, plans, and reviews departmental budgets as a prelude to the annual budget and works effectively with the finance committee to review the budget prior to submitting it to the board.

4. Acts within the financial policy set by the board.

5. Provides the spark for initiating a fund-raising campaign started with the board's prior approval as to method, goal, and purpose.

6. Effective at deriving the greatest possible benefit from limited financial and plant resources.

D. *Summary*

1. Please list what you believe are the head's three main strengths in his position.

2. Please list the three areas in which you would like to see the head improve in the coming year.